



## King County

**Ron Sims**

King County Executive

701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3210

Seattle, WA 98104

206-296-4040 Fax 206-296-0194

TTY Relay: 711

[www.metrokc.gov](http://www.metrokc.gov)

June 18, 2007

The Honorable Larry Gossett  
Chair, King County Council  
Room 1200  
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Gossett:

Enclosed for your consideration and approval is the ordinance authorizing the Transit Division of the King County Department of Transportation to amend operating routes for February 2008, as specified under K.C.C.8.94.020. Included in this ordinance are revisions to Eastside service in the Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Bothell, Woodinville and Duvall areas. These changes to East King County service are made possible primarily through resources available from *Transit Now*, but also through efficiencies resulting from the routing restructure proposals themselves. In addition to the ordinance changes, this transmittal also includes information about the re-opening of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT) and other administrative changes for September 2007.

### **Transit Tunnel Re-Opening**

The re-opening of DSTT scheduled for September 2007 has significant ramifications for both King County Metro Transit and for our many downtown Seattle bus riders. Changes associated with the re-opening of the DSTT are not included as part of the service change ordinance, as they are administrative changes only. However, when the tunnel re-opens in September 2007, after a two-year closure, several service objectives will guide tunnel route assignments associated with the re-opening:

- Maintaining a geographic balance among King County subareas.
- Balancing bus volumes by time of day and direction of travel.
- Making best use of the low-floor articulated hybrid coaches.
- Maximizing all-day use of the tunnel.
- Preparing and educating operators and riders for joint bus/rail operations to begin in 2009.



The joint operation of the tunnel with buses and trains will begin in 2009 with the start of Sound Transit's Link light rail service. In the interim, Metro will operate a service level consistent with joint operation in order to provide consistent training to drivers and customers, and for the eventual testing of train cars prior to their start of revenue service. Although the number of buses that will operate through the tunnel during the morning and afternoon peak is less than what it was pre-closure, the number of daily bus trips will be similar as use of the tunnel will be more consistent throughout the day. As a result, 15 of the 21 routes that formerly operated in the tunnel prior to its retrofit for joint light rail/bus operation will return to the tunnel, along with two routes that will operate in the tunnel for the first time. Former tunnel routes that will not return to the tunnel are peak-only Routes 177, 190, 196, 266, 306 and 312.

Three routes not previously operated in the tunnel are now planned for tunnel operation, they are: Route 74 Express, and Routes 174 and 217. Route 74 Express is moving to the tunnel, because it operates similar routing to Routes 71 Express, 72 Express, and 73 Express which are returning to the tunnel. All four routes would subsequently share a common routing between downtown Seattle and the University District. The Route 174 tunnel assignment will boost tunnel bus volumes during the midday and the route will benefit from the assignment of low-floor hybrid articulated coaches because it is a high ridership/frequent stop service. Route 217 will operate in the tunnel during the morning peak period only. This allows Seattle to Factoria and Eastgate area commuters to catch either Routes 217 or 212 at a common stop.

Other routes will be reassigned from one street to another in downtown Seattle in order to make best use of transit priority treatments on those streets and to balance out volumes on streets and at stops. Most of these surface street reassignments are done in order to continue to maximize the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue transit priority corridor for buses, and to optimize overall bus volumes on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues. These changes are expected to benefit bus riders and the overall operation of downtown Seattle streets for all traffic. Finally, routes with common destinations are grouped as much as possible to provide a higher level of service to these shared market areas.

#### **Other Administrative Service Changes Planned for September 2007**

At the September 2007 Service Change, Metro plans to implement Sunday service on Route 234, which serves Kenmore, Juanita, Kirkland and Bellevue. This route is identified in *Transit Now* as a High Ridership service and currently operates only Monday through Saturday. Route 234 has seen steady ridership growth on the days that it operates and the addition of Sunday service should increase the attractiveness of the route. The new Sunday service will feature sixty-minute frequency between approximately 9:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.

September will also bring an increase in the span of service offered on Route 269. Operating between Issaquah, Sammamish and Overlake, Route 269 currently provides limited service during the peak period. The September investment is in response to requests from the city of Sammamish as well as employees of Microsoft and other Overlake area employees. The

investment will increase the span of peak service, providing four trips later in the morning until about 11:00 a.m. and three trips earlier in the afternoon starting about 3:30 p.m.

The third administrative action will eliminate two midday trips on Route 272. In previous years seasonal adjustments have been made on Route 272 due to reduced demand in the summer months coinciding with the drop in the University of Washington student population. Over the past several years, these two midday trips have not been well used and alternative service is available to downtown Bellevue where connections can be made to a variety of Eastside routes to other destinations served by Route 272. This change is part of the February 2008 Eastside service change package. Since these trips are not operated during the summer months, Metro takes this action to avoid adding these midday trips back into the September schedule only to remove them again in February 2008.

### **Community Involvement – East King County Changes**

The proposed changes are the culmination of a two-phase public outreach process conducted jointly by Metro and Sound Transit on the Eastside that started in 2006. A tabloid was sent during the spring of 2006 to approximately 160,000 Eastside residents in Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville and Duvall. A project website and online questionnaire were made available and taped shows were shown on municipal television channels for King County, Kirkland, Bellevue and Redmond. Efforts were made to reach social service agencies and groups representing non-English-speaking residents. Metro's Service Planning group, the Department of Transportation Community Relations and Communications group along with Sound Transit worked with a community sounding board representing the above-mentioned areas. The role of the sounding board has been to advise staff on the public outreach process, attend public outreach events, work with staff to review public comments received during the public outreach process, and comment on potential service change options as they are developed by staff.

In the spring and summer of 2006, soon after the first tabloid was sent, three public meetings and two information tables were held to gather comments and ideas from riders on how transit service could be improved. In response to the information received through the outreach process, staff developed draft service proposals with the assistance of the sounding board.

The passage of *Transit Now* last fall provided the opportunity to modify this initial proposal, because of Metro's increased financial capacity. A second tabloid describing proposed changes to bus service in Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Duvall and Woodinville was mailed in January 2007 to approximately 136,000 households affected by the proposed changes and distributed to major employers, social service agencies, community colleges, and libraries, as well as being included on Metro's website. The tabloid included a postage-paid questionnaire asking for public feedback on proposed changes.

During both phases, outreach was conducted to Eastside businesses through Metro's Commute Trip Reduction network, and news releases were placed in several newspapers serving the

Eastside. Staff and the sounding board worked together to review the public comments and made changes to a number of the original service proposals in response to public input and the availability of resources due to *Transit Now*.

### **East King County Changes**

The primary objective of the Eastside service changes proposed for next spring is strengthening the Eastside bus service network to increase ridership, consistent with the *Transit Now* program. Highlighting the service changes proposed for East King County are two significant improvements to core services identified as *Transit Now* "High Ridership" routes in the Redmond-Eastgate and Redmond-Kirkland areas. A new north-south connection, Route 221, would operate between Redmond's Education Hill neighborhood and Eastgate Park-and-Ride via Redmond Park-and-Ride, Overlake Transit Center, 148<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and Bellevue Community College. A new east-west connection, Route 248, would operate between Redmond's Avondale Road neighborhood and Kirkland Transit Center via Redmond Town Center, Redmond Park-and-Ride and Northeast 85<sup>th</sup> Street. Routes 221 and 248 would provide 30-minute all-day service seven days a week with 60-minute service in the evening. Route 248 would replace part of the service coverage currently provided by Sound Transit's ST Express Route 540, allowing Sound Transit to redeploy buses and service hours to Route 545, improving cross-lake service and relieving crowded conditions. The Sound Transit Board has already approved the shortening of Route 540 to operate between Kirkland and the University District, contingent on King County Council approval of Metro Route 248.

Other Eastside changes included in the ordinance include revisions to Routes 222, 232, 233, 249, 251, 266, and 921, and discontinuation of Routes 220 and 254. Routes 222 and 233 would be shortened so as not to duplicate portions of new Routes 221 and 248. Route 238 would be revised to replace a portion of the coverage provided by Route 254 along Northeast 80th Street and serve Lake Washington High School and the Houghton Park-and-Ride. Routes 249 and 266 would be shortened to discontinue portions of these routes with very low ridership, and Route 249 would be reoriented to Overlake Transit Center to provide new coverage along part of Northeast 40th Street. Route 251 would be revised to provide new off-peak service along Northeast 124th and 128th Streets in the English Hill neighborhood, and its frequency during weekday peak hours to every 30 minutes. Route 921 would be revised to provide service along Kamber Road and more direct routing in downtown Bellevue. Routes 220 and 254 would be discontinued to make better use of existing resources, since portions of the coverage provided by these routes would be included in the revised Eastside network. Administrative changes would be made to Routes 266 and 311 to reduce trips that do not attract many riders, using these resources more efficiently on the remainder of the routes affected by this service change ordinance.

The proposed Eastside service restructure would create a redesigned Eastside bus network capable of attracting more riders through more frequent service, longer hours of operation, and routings that better match current travel demand patterns. These changes would result in improved connections with Sound Transit and/or Metro's regional routes at the Eastgate Park-

The Honorable Larry Gossett

June 14, 2007

Page 5

and-Ride, and the transit centers at Overlake, Redmond, Bellevue and Kirkland. Although a few riders would lose service as result of these changes, the changes improve services with greater ridership potential. The changes also would benefit student transit in the Lake Washington and Bellevue school districts through more convenient schedules and more direct routing.

### **Six-Year Plan Consistency**

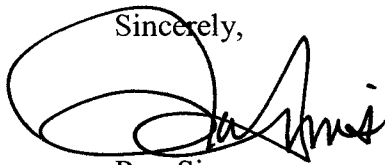
All of the proposed service changes are consistent with the current Six-Year Metro Transit Development Plan strategies. In particular, they are consistent with Strategy S-1, to pursue efficiencies in existing services on major corridors, Strategy S-2, to improve transit on-time performance, Strategy S-3, to create new routes serving established urban and manufacturing/industrial centers and urban areas, Strategy S-7, to improve community mobility options through revised routing, and Strategy S-10, to work with appropriate agencies to achieve integrated, cost-effective and efficient operation of public transportation services in King County addressing the needs of current and potential riders.

Collectively, the changes as described in Exhibit A of the draft Service Change Ordinance, combined with the planned administrative changes in the East King County transit network would add approximately 17,000 annual hours of bus service.

### **Questions or Comments about the Draft Ordinance**

If you have any questions about specific details in the draft Service Change Ordinance for September 2007, please contact Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, at 206-263-3109.

Sincerely,



Ron Sims  
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Ross Baker, Chief of Staff

Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director

Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Bob Cowan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Harold Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)

Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Transit Division, DOT

Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development Section, Transit Division, DOT